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A GROUP OF OLD-TIMERS

Vlll: First Banker, Sheriff and Others.

GEORGE J. KINNAIRD

Another of Edmonton's old-timers who came to this country in the service of the great company is George J. Kinnaird, or as he is more popularly known, Jock Kinnarid, old-timer and warm-hearted Scot. Even after thirty-three years' residence in Canada one is inclined in cosmopolitan Edmonton to designate Mr. Kinnaird as a Scotchman, for he has still the delightful burr of the north country on his tongue and a deliberate,genial manner that never developed under Canada's mercurial airs.

He was born in Dundee, Scotland, about the middle of last century and although his native place had a population of over 100,000 then it was still officially only a town. This fact strikes a westerner as remarkable, for in our land of mushroom growth a hamlet with an electric light plant, a weekly paper and a Board of Trade begins to puff out its chest and talk of "this here city." In Scotland it seems a centre of population must be a royal borough, the seat of a Bishop or of a University before it looks for civic dignity.

In his youth Mr. Kinnaird inclined to making marine engineering his life work. His father had secured him a clerkship with a firm interested in foundries and ship-building, and he got his idea here. But the long seven

years of apprenticeship and study that stood between him and the goal held him back. Through all his early years he heard much talk of the Hudson Bay Company and its territories over the ocean, for so many Scotchmen were in the service that Scotland was more generally interested in the Company than either Canada or England.

Through Edward Ellice, an old friend of his father who was a large shareholder in the company, the young man secured an appointment with it and sailed from Liverpool on December 16, 1875, to Portland, Maine, by the Allan Liner "Sardinian." Two other Hudson Bay clerks named Colin Thompson and Goldsworthy came over with him. From Portland t ey went by train to Montreal, where they reported to Sir Donald Smith, Governmor of the Company. They were Sir Donald's guests at dinner on New Year's Day, along with Peter McKenzie, then in Montreal on a visit from Labrador distfict, and H. Greenwood of the Company's offices at Montreal, and now of Edmonton.

The younger men were entertained by the exchange of reminiscences by Sir Donald and Peter McKenzie, who succeeded him as Factor in Labrador and who only retired this month from active service in Montreal. They spun some very thin yarns of life in Labrador, Mr. Kinnaird recalling one particular incident in which Sir Donald declared the weather was so cold he and a friend had been an hour and a half stoking at a fire to make the kettle boil.

With these cheerful stories of life at the Company's outposts still fresh in their mind the three young men drove

to the train from Sir Donald's house. They could not fail to be impressed with such an object lesson of success in perseverance as Sir Donald in his beautiful home on the Mountain presented. Each one had his post allotted, Mr. Kinnaird choosing the northern district instead of a post in the Southern (or Ontario and Quebec) district. Goldsworthy took the latter and was drowned a few years later on Lake Huron. On their trip out from Montreal Mr. Kinnaird says he found the country they passed in Ontario about as little developed in appearance as what we see from western railroads today. They went by rail to Moorhead, Dakota, and from there to Fort Garry by stage.

The stage journey lasted for three days. On the second day they drove into a blizzard at Scratching River and at dawn on the following day had to dig the stage out of a snowbank. On the stage which ran weekly the only other passengers were an American soldier and his mother. Once arrived at Fort Garry the new clerks put up at the Hudson Bay Fort, where John McTavish, the dashing, popular Factor, was in charge. There were about 20 clerks at Fort Garry then and their quarters were in the long low building to the right of the bastioned gateway which still stands. A common mess-room for the officers and clerks was situated in the Chief Factor's house, and McTavish always sat at the head of the table during each meal. The meals were well-served and good with plenty of buffalo-meat, venison and vegetables. In addition to the clerks there were many laborers, boatmen and teamsters employed about the fort.

Mr. Kinnaird's first appointment was to the post at Oak Point on Lake Manitoba where he remained for three years as assistant to William Clark, officer in charge. The Sauteaux Indians traded at this post and there was a half-breed settlement near the post. Ten miles up the Lake was the Company's "cattleguard" or stock-yard, with a man named John Henderson in charge. Now during the rising of 1870 some half-breeds seized Oak Point, killed some cattle at the cattle-guard and took John Henderson prisoner for several weeks. Henderson, being a fiery man used to make indignant protest against Riel and longed for revenge on him.

Strangely enough it was this man who being very much down on his luck in Regina in 1885, was offered the task of hanging Riel, and he did the work.

In all Mr. Kinnaird spent eight years between Oak Point and Manitoba House. He then left Lake Manitoba for Fort Ellice, a post named after his father's friend, Edward Ellice. He was in charge there for three years, succeeding "Big Bear" McLean who was imprisoned by Big Bear in 1885. Fort Ellice which has now dwindled away to nothing, was even then in decay. Fort Qu'Appelle had stolen away its prestige as a centre. During the rebellion Mr. Kinnaird was stationed here, and the most striking incident of that period was the offer made him by the band of Sioux near there. They asked,if the Sauteaux rose in arms with Riel, that they (the Sioux) be allowed to fight them. How much of this was gratitude to Canada for sheltering them and

howmmuch was prompted by the old desire to fight is an open question.

Boulton's Scouts were outfitted at this post during the rebellion.

Upon leaving Fort Ellice in 1886 Mr. Kinnaird was appointed Accountant of the Edmonton district, succeeding Joseph Hargrave whose work on the Red River Settlement had already been published. The late Hon. Richard Hardisty was in charge of that post at the time. Ever since then Mr. Kinnarid has resided in Edmonton with the exception of 15 months, when he was in charge of Athabasca Landing, then a shipping-point for northern supplies. In 1889 Mr. Kinnaird married Miss Kate Wilson Garnet. He returned to Edmonton in 1891 as district Accountant and some time later was given charge of the commercial end of the Company's store here. In January, 1900, he was offered the post of Secretary-Treasurer to the City of Edmonton, and he remained in the city's service until this year.